1560/1139.

A

SERMON

PREACHED

By the R. Rev. Dr. Hussey,

IN THE CHAPEL

IN

SPANISH PLACE,

ON THE

SIXTH OF MAY, 1798.

TAKEN IN SHORT-HAND BY ONE OF THE AUDIENCE.

TO WHICH IS ADDED

A SHORT ACCOUNT

OF THE

PUBLIC PRAYERS

IN THE

SPANISH CHAPEL,

FOR HIS HOLINESS

POPE PIUS VI.

ON THE

FOURTEENTH OF MAY, 1798.

LONDON:

Printed and published by J. P. COGHLAN, No. 37,
DUKE STREET, GROSVENOR SQUARE:
And sold by Messrs. BOOKER, Bond Street; KEATING, Warwick Street; LEWIS, Russel Street, Covent Garden; and ROBINSONS Paternoster Row.

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A SERMON.

St. Luke, chapter xv. v. 11,—24 inclusive.

11. *Then Jesus said to his disciples: a certain man had two sons:*

12. *And the younger of them said to his father: Father, give me that portion of my inheritance which falleth to me; and he divided unto them his substance.*

13. *And not many days after, the younger son gathering all together, went abroad into a far country, and there wasted his substance by living riotously.*

14. *And after he had spent all, there came a great famine on that country, and he began to want.*

15. *And he went, and hired himself to one of the people of that country, and this man sent him into his farm to feed swine.*

16. *And he was desirous to feed upon the husks which the swine did eat, for no one gave him food.*

17. *And returning to himſelf, he ſaid: How many hired ſervants in my Father's houſe who have plenty of bread, whilſt I here periſh with hunger.*

18. *I will ariſe, and I will go to my father, and ſay to him,* " *Father, I have ſinned againſt* " *heaven and before thee.*

19. " *I am not now worthy to be called thy ſon;* " *make me as one of thy hired ſervants.*"

20. *And riſing up he went to his father. And when he was yet a great way off his father ſaw him and was moved with compaſſion, and running to him, fell upon his neck, and kiſſed him.*

21. *And the ſon ſaid unto him. Father, I have ſinned againſt heaven and before thee. I am not now worthy to be called thy ſon.*

22. *But the father ſaid to his ſervants: bring forth quickly the firſt robe, and put it on him; and put a ring on his finger, and ſhoes on his feet.*

23. *And bring hither the fatted calf and kill it; and let us eat and rejoice.*

24. *Becauſe this my ſon was dead, and he is come to life; he was loſt, and now is found.*

THE parable which you have now heard, My brethren, is an abridged narrative of the ſinner's fall from grace, and of his return again

again to God. A narrative of which the world affords many inſtances; and to which the conſcience of ſome of my preſent hearers, may, perhaps, bear witneſs. The obvious intention of our Lord, in this parable, is, to give ſuch characteriſtic marks of his own mercy, as might ſerve as an encouragement to the ſtrayed ſinner to return to his duty. The vices which too uſually lead men aſtray from the paths of preſent and future happineſs, are truly and pathetically painted, in the conduct of the prodigal ſon, whilſt a wanderer from his father's houſe; and form a moſt ſtriking contraſt with the means which Providence makes uſe of, to reſtore him again to mercy and to reconciliation — a mercy and reconciliation deſcribed in the moſt tender and inviting manner.

Indeed, who could give a more ſtriking picture of mercy, than Jeſus Chriſt himſelf, the fountain of all mercy? In what glowing colors is this attribute (which is above all his other works) painted in different parts of his goſpel. In one chapter he compares it to a woman, who, having loſt the ſum, which was the long-earned fruit of her honeſt labour and induſtry, is altogether inconſolable. " *She lighteth a candle,* ſays the goſpel, *and dili-*

gently ſearcheth every part of her houſe; and as ſoon as ſhe finds her loſt treaſure, with joy and gladneſs in her heart and countenance, ſhe invites her friends and acquaintance to come and congratulate with her."

In another part of the goſpel, he compares the mercy of God to the good ſhepherd, who after a ſhort and indiſpenſable abſence from his flock, and finding that one is miſſing, immediately alarmed, he collects the reſt of the flock, ſecure together—he traverſes mountains and plains, calling aloud for the ſtrayed ſheep, whilſt plains and mountains eccho to his call—fatigues and difficulties diſcourage him not—he at length ſees the wanderer—recovers freſh vigour—places the ſtrayed ſheep upon his ſhoulders, and carries it back in triumph into the ſheepfold.

And as if all theſe parables and figures, formed but an imperfect image of the mercy of God towards a ſinner; Jeſus Chriſt himſelf has interwoven in the parable, which I have read to you, the moſt picturesque and affecting circumſtances which human expreſſions can reach, when they attempt to deſcribe the ſublime myſtery of God's mercy to a repenting ſinner. He paints, in the moſt lively and expreſſive colours, the ingratitude of the prodigal

digal ſon, in order to imprint the more deeply in our minds the boundleſs tenderneſs and compaſſion of his merciful Father.

Our Saviour having traced out this plan for the inſtruction of the world, I feel it my duty, to employ my inefficient endeavors, in making ſuch obſervations upon it, to my preſent audience, as, I hope, may edify, and perhaps inſtruct them.

But in order to adhere the more cloſely to the plan, as well as to the words of the goſpel, I ſhall endeavor, in the firſt place, under the figure of the prodigal ſon, whilſt a fugitive from his father's houſe, to point out to you, ſome of the many evils and miſeries, which attend the life of a ſinner whilſt he ſtrays away from God; and in the ſecond place, under the figure of the prodigal's return, I ſhall endeavour to convey ſome faint idea to your mind, of the infinite mercy of the Almighty, in the ways and means which he employs in withdrawing the prodigal from his evil ways, and in reſtoring him to his paternal manſion, and duty.

I. PART.

You have undoubtedly perceived, that the parable, in deſcribing the ſinner's fall, does not conſider it as a caſual and unintended misfortune, which ariſes from the mere frailties of human nature; or from ſome unforeſeen and unexpected temptation, which much extenuates the ſinner's guilt. If you conſider the drift of the parable, you will ſee, that it deſcribes the guilt of the prodigal ſon, as ariſing from a deliberate, determined, reſolution to plunge into ſin, without any ſpecial allurement or temptation, to ſeduce him into it; and the gradations of vice are ſo minutely marked, that if we attend to the bare recital of it, we cannot fail to derive the moſt ſalutary inſtruction.

The firſt mark which ſeems to characterize our young prodigal, is his deſire of withdrawing himſelf from his father's authority, imagining that the poſſeſſion of the goods of this world, by making him independent, would make him happy. "Father," ſays he, "give "me that portion of my inheritance which "belongs to me." You hear what a word he makes uſe of! The preface to his rebellion is the employing the tender and ſacred appellation of *father!* a name which ought to have inſpired him, with the moſt dutiful affection.

Should

Should not the ſacred name of father have recalled to his mind the numberleſs benefits which he had received from him? Does it not tell him the many cares and anxieties attending his infant years?—the toilſome days, and reſtleſs nights, of his parent, to ſecure a ſubſiſtence for his riper age, and to eſtabliſh him in the world, with comfort and credit? Is it not to that ſacred name that he owes his very exiſtence? Were not theſe ſufficient ties to ſecure his fidelity and attachment? So far from it, they were the preliminaries to his unnatural rebellion. The preſence of his father, inſtead of being, as it ſurely ought to be, the ſource of his joy and happineſs, only imprints upon his mind a ſullen reſtraint. His eaſy laws imbitter his pleaſures—his inſtructions irritate him—his bountiful kindneſs diſguſts him; and even the indulgent pardons for his follies, which he had ſo often obtained, are ſo many means which the ungrateful child employs to offend him again, with expected impunity. Could this afflicted father expect ſuch an ungrateful return? Had his ſervants and dependants—had thoſe mercenaries who were attached to him, through hope of gain, or fear of puniſhment, had they rebelled againſt him, he could not be ſo ſurpriſed;

but,

but that the child of his boſom ſhould proceed to ſuch extremities, is what pierces his very ſoul.

Catholics, under theſe figures, do you perceive your own reſemblance? Obſerve the relations between God, and you. Compare his bounty towards you, with your gratitude in return—and in every feature you will diſcover your likeneſs to the prodigal ſon. You are forced to acknowledge, that whatever you enjoy in the order of grace, or of nature, is his gift. Riches, pleaſures, accompliſhments of body, or mind—virtue, innocence, piety, being educated within the ſacred pale of the church, or being admitted within the myſtic body, by inſpiring grace—all muſt proceed from the liberality of your heavenly Father! In return for which, in the language of the prodigal ſon, you ſay, "Father, give me that portion of my inheritance"—not of that heavenly inheritance which is to laſt for ever; but of that inheritance which may enable me to withdraw from thy authority, and to indulge myſelf in worldly pleaſures. I aſk not for grace, or ſpiritual benefits. Thou mayeſt confer them, upon ſuch as wiſh for them—I envy them not. I aſk for thoſe worldly advantages, which are more conformable to my taſte.

taſte, and inclinations. The recompences attendant upon virtue, in a future life, are too diſtant to rouze my wiſhes—too dim and remote, to counteract my preſent enjoyments. "Father, give me that portion of my inheri-"tance." To expreſs by words ſuch a wiſh, would be blaſphemy. And yet to expreſs it by one's conduct, is it not equally a crime? Such expreſſions may not be heard even from the moſt unhallowed lips; but ſentiments congenial to them, point out the rule of conduct of thouſands of ſinners in the world.

It is true, that in the beginning of the Chriſtian's departure from his innocence; when he takes the firſt ſteps from the ways of virtue, he does not openly declare himſelf a rebel to his heavenly Father. Perhaps in his own mind, he is reſolved not to proceed in ſin, to any remarkable length. He is ſurpriſed into his firſt fall, which was the reſult of bad company, with which he caſually and unexpectedly met. This fall is immediately followed by inward ſhame, and remorſe—all the images of virtue, and religion, which he imbibed in his education, riſe up in his mind. A conſcious crimſon ſhame covers his countenance, though viewed only by his Creator, and guardian angel. His conſcience too,

raiſes her plaintive, reprimanding, voice—a voice full of confuſion, and terror—upbraids him with his folly, and urges him to return to the ſtate from which he fell. But, alas! after this firſt eſſay in the ways of ſin, his return becomes a matter of awful difficulty; and even thoſe enjoyments, which were heretofore innocent, become new temptations; and the unhappy youth is again ſhipwrecked upon a fatal rock, over which he had ſailed in the days of his innocence, without obſervation of any danger, becauſe his virtuous mind perceived no danger near. His next return to virtue, by repentance, becomes ſtill more difficult, whilſt each relapſe into vice becomes eaſy by repetition. He falls again; but by an extraordinary effort, urged by God's grace, he again riſes. But if again he falls—it is—to riſe—no more.——After theſe repeated trials, and relapſes, he inſenſibly loſes all reliſh for the practices of piety and religion—His conſcience no longer importunes, or alarms, him; but becomes dumb and inſenſible. His remorſe is ſucceeded by a ſpiritual gangrene, or mortification, which deprives him of all religious feeling. He endeavours to baniſh from his mind the fear of God's judgments—and then forſooth, for the firſt

time,

time, he affects to entertain doubts about thoſe religious tenets in which he had been educated; doubts not formed from reflection or reading; but produced by one night's vice: and from doubts he proceeds, without further knowledge or enquiry, into an abſolute diſbelief of religion, thereby ſeconding the judgments of the Almighty, who, in puniſhment of his crimes, withdraws the gift of divine faith from him, leaving him like a ſhip without a helm, upon the boiſterous ocean.

He preſumptuouſly ſays: "I have commit-" ted ſin, and yet what evil hath befallen me?" This impious reflection terminates his final doubts about his creed. He then raſhly throws off the remaining feeble ties of virtue and religion. Why torment myſelf, ſays he, any longer with obſervances of religion? The few which I had lately practiſed, will be unavailable to ſalvation, ſince my neglect of the reſt, together with the many other ſins I have been guilty of, deprive me of any title to eternal happineſs. Since I am reſolved not to obſerve all the duties of the goſpel, I muſt ſeek for that intoxication in pleaſure, which may ſilence the cries of my conſcience, or make me inſenſible to its reproaches, in the

midſt of my enjoyments. As I have got that portion of my inheritance which belongs to me, I will quit my father's houſe—I can no longer bear thoſe monitors of my early, happy, innocent days—I will go into a foreign land, where I ſhall be no longer within the reach of the remonſtrances of my father, and forſake thoſe principles of religion, and piety, in which I was educated—"and he accordingly," ſays the parable, "went into a far "country, and there waſted his ſubſtance, by "living riotouſly."

What conſternation, and mourning in his father's houſe! What ſcandal this ſeparation cauſes! In vain does his diſconſolate parent, endeavour to move him by his entreaties! In vain does he call upon him to return! the prodigal hears him not, but flies off upon the wings of inordinate joy, at his having now obtained imaginary liberty. Unhappy ſinner! His joy is not to laſt. Diſtreſs, and ſorrow, tread cloſe upon the heels of it. Had he remained within his father's manſion, the grace of God in ſome favourable moment would make him reflect upon his folly—would make him ſee the deformity of his ſins, and reſtore him to his duty. But no—he ſeeks out for that diſtant land, where he muſt be inacceſſible to every

every means of converſion. He leaps over the ſacred pale of the Church, and goes into a far country, where the communion of ſaints cannot encircle him—he ſeeks the company of the libertine, and unbeliever, where piety is a ſubject for mockery, and ſcorn—where unbounded latitudinarianiſum has ſuperſeded the faith of Chriſt; and where, at beſt, the utmoſt limits of pretended Chriſtianity, extend only to a decent outward profeſſion of it, which covers an interior cold incredulity; and a diſbelief, at heart, of every myſtery, revealed by God. Where is this ſtrange land—this far country, mentioned in the parable? If you meaſure it only by diſtance of place, it is contiguous to his father's houſe—it ſurrounds it. But if you meaſure it by the difference of the lives and morals of the inhabitants of each place, the diſtance is that which ſeparates heaven from hell.

In vain does the Church call upon him to return to his duty. In vain are thoſe tribunals for repentance open, to encourage him to a confeſſion of his crimes, where the truly penitent ſinner, receives conſolation as well as pardon. In vain do the miniſters of the altar, expound the ſolemn myſteries, and inculcate the duties thereof—he is deaf to our

inſtructions

inſtructions—he deſpiſes our ſacraments, and myſteries—and goes into that *far country*, where he is ſoon reduced to ſpiritual penury, and want. He goes in queſt of imaginary liberty, but is reduced to real ſlavery. His pleaſures quickly vaniſh, like the ſportive dreams of a diſtempered imagination; and when he fondly thought himſelf at the ſummit of every happineſs, he awakes from his deluſion—finds himſelf the ſlave of a cruel maſter, and employed in one of the moſt degrading offices which could aggravate the moſt abject poverty, and wretchedneſs. "His maſter ſent "him into his farm," ſays the parable, "to "feed his ſwine."

Such is the degraded ſtate of a ſinner, who ſpent his youth, and fortune, in the criminal pleaſures of the world. During the feveriſh paſſions of his youth, his folly only excited compaſſion, and pity; even in the breaſts of the admirers, and followers of virtue, and religion. They lament his imprudence, and misfortunes; and they hope that more ſedate reflection, and experience, may reform him. But when they ſee him perſiſt in his wickedneſs—wnen they ſee him in more advanced years, mixing the diſſolute follies of youth, with the vices of old age; even in the eyes of the

the moſt charitable, he inſtantly becomes an object of contempt, and horror. His misfortunes, and wretchedneſs, are conſidered only as the juſt puniſhment of his crimes. His very words are poiſon to a virtuous ear. A tainted atmoſphere ſurrounds him, and forbids the approach of any who regard their preſervation; and parents point him out to their children, as a monument of infamy, expoſed before them by a merciful God; in order to deter them from ever following his example. Unhappy ſinner! ſince you have loſt every thing which is valuable in this life. Since by your follies, and vices, you have loſt the comforts of your family—the protection of your father—your health—your youth—your honor—your character—your friends—amidſt that general ſhipwreck, ſtrive to ſave, at leaſt, your ſoul.—It is the only thing that remains, and will remain for all eternity. Do not crown all your miſery, by cloſing the wretched ſcene in eternal reprobation. Having led a life, diſhonorable to the world—odious to God—and inſupportable to yourſelf, do not commit the laſt, and worſt, crime of all, by dying impenitent. Hope, and repentance, the laſt plank after ſhipwreck, ſtill remains for you: and however unworthy thou

art

art of mercy, yet he who willeth not the death of the ſinner, commiſſions me, as his ambaſſador, to offer peace and forgiveneſs, in return for your repentance; and points out the return of the prodigal, as the model for you, to try to efface the hand-writing on the wall which decrees your eternal ruin.

II. PART.

When I reflect upon that wonderful prodigy, the converſion of a ſinner, ſays the truly eloquent St. John Chryſoſtom, all other prodigies, and miracles, are diminiſhed in my view. The ſhowering down the manna in the deſert—the opening a paſſage, through the Red Sea—the rock which poured forth torrents of water, only by the touch of the wand of Moſes. The ſtopping the ſun in it's mid-day courſe, in order to prolong the day, and thereby give to the choſen people, under the command of Joſhua, time to obtain a compleat victory over the enemies of God. All theſe miracles and prodigies, imprint my mind with awe, of him, who is the ſovereign Ruler of the univerſe; but when I ſee this ſame ſovereign Ruler of the univerſe, deſcend to offer peace and reconciliation, to a worm of the earth,

who

who impenitently rebels againſt him; when inſtead of cruſhing him, and his pigmy rebellion to atoms; and annihilating him, and all his follies, I find the ſovereign Lord of the world, accommodating himſelf to the ſinner's weakneſs, in order to convert him, I no longer cry out with the royal Prophet, O God, and ſovereign Lord! but in the language of my heart, I call him my father, and my friend!

To imprint theſe ſentiments on your mind, let me call your attention to the circumſtanſtances relative to the prodigal's return, and the reception he gets from his indulgent, and bountiful father.

The firſt ſtep towards his converſion, proceeds from his reflecting upon his own wretched condition; and as the parable expreſſes it, "returning to himſelf, he ſaid, how "many hired ſervants in my father's houſe, "who have plenty of bread, whilſt I here "periſh with hunger." Whilſt any part of that portion of his inheritance remained, which he extorted from his father, it fomented his paſſions, and gave the means of gratifying them—but when he was reduced to penury and wretchedneſs, the cloud raiſed be-

fore his eyes, by the indulgence in his criminal appetites, diſappeared like magic; and the knowledge of his own miſery, ſerves as a preliminary to the knowledge of his father's bounty. "How many hired ſervants in my "father's houſe, who have plenty of bread, "whilſt I here periſh with hunger!" He compares the happineſs enjoyed in his father's houſe, with his own miſery. He compares the joyful days of his firſt innocence, when no remorſe ſtung him, when no crime diſturbed his peaceful ſlumbers, or ſcared his imagination; with his preſent ſtate of conſcious guilt, and heart-breaking melancholy. The grace of him who ſeeks the ſinner, raiſes at that moment a ſtorm in his breaſt. His paſt crimes torment him—the fear of ſtill greater puniſhment to come, terrify him—ſhame, confuſion, and remorſe overwhelm his mind—and then, in the language of true repentance, he ſays, "I will riſe, and return to "my father." This is the firſt reſolution which the grace of God forms in the heart of a converted ſinner. I will riſe—I will no longer be the ſlave of that paſſion, which deprived me of my true liberty, as well as of the favor and protection of my heavenly Father.

ther. I will riſe and no longer dread the jeſts, and raillery, of the companions of my criminal pleaſures. I will riſe, and trample under foot, thoſe vicious inclinations, which, by being indulged, tyranniſed over me, and became a kind of ſecond nature. I will riſe, and ſet at nought all thoſe worldly intereſts, which firſt tempted me, to depart from my duty. "I will riſe, and return to my fa-"ther."

After ſuch penitent reſolutions, he no longer fears that his converſion might be rejected, or treated with diſdain, by his father. He does not ſay, I will ſend an agent, to try to mollify my father's anger. I will proceed with circumſpection, and caution, leſt I ſhould irritate him more: and leſt his recollection of my crimes, might induce him to refuſe to ſee me. No—no—he wells knows, that a ſincere return to his father, is a ſovereign charm, which breaks the chains put on by the moſt inveterate habits of vice—which diſarms the juſtice of the Almighty, and turns the judge himſelf into a forgiving father. "I "will riſe, and go to my father."

Accordingly the fond, penetrating, eye, of the father, diſcovers him on his return,

though he is as yet far off. What a fair opportunity for the father, to put on the ſupercilious looks of an offended ſuperior! to raiſe a thouſand difficulties before he would admit him into his preſence; and even then, firſt to hear his apology, and promiſes of future conduct, before he would promiſe to pardon him, or to permit him to abide in the paternal manſion. Such a conduct might be ſuitable to the vain reſentments of ſinful man; but by no means becoming the picture which the Father of mercy, gives of himſelf, in the character of the father of the prodigal ſon; for he deals not with man, as man does with his brother!

When the prodigal approached, though ſtill at a diſtance, the father looked towards his ſon!—How full of pity, and tenderneſs, was that look! He obſerved his tattered garments—he ſaw him pale, and emaciated with want. The prodigal's pardon was, at that moment, ſigned and ſealed within his father's breaſt. The miſerable aſpect of his child, makes him forget his ingratitude and rebellion. Nature awakes, and all the ſecret ſprings of a parent's feelings, are inſtantly ſet in motion: ſo that he does not even wait for his arrival

arrival, the parable ſays, but runs to meet him on the way, and with joy, and gladneſs, confirms him in his hope of pardon and forgiveneſs. He does not give time to the prodigal's conſcious guilt, to throw him into any embarraſſment, that might confound him in his father's preſence, and render the meeting leſs conſoling. He does not expoſe him to thoſe new temptations, which the ſinner too often meets, in the interval between his firſt reſolutions of riſing from ſin, and his complete return to his duty. He prevents all theſe dangers and temptations, by meeting him on the way—he folds him in his arms, and ſhews him that he is arrived in a ſafe harbour, after all his toils and perils.

What a picture does the eternal being give of his mercy! The confeſſion of the ſon is ſhort, and pathetic. *Father*, ſays he, *I have ſinned againſt heaven, and before thee.* The father makes no reply—his ſilence is expreſſive and ſublime. His joy is too great to allow him utterance. And moreover, he would not imbitter his ſon's return by any reproaches. He is convinced that his repentance is ſincere—that is all the puniſhment he inflicts.

Neither

Neither would he delay the full ratification of the prodigal's pardon—he enters into no diſcuſſion, but calls for the robe that decorated him in the days of his innocence—bring the firſt or beſt robe—he will admit of no delay—bring *quickly*, ſays he, the firſt robe. Though his juſtice be ſlow in puniſhing the crimes of the ſinner; yet his mercy is ſudden and inſtantaneous, in comforting, and rewarding, his cordial repentance.

Now ſinners, come hither, and tell me; what it is, that you find alarming, and frightful, in this repentance, and pardon? Are there any marks of terror in this converſion? To me, it appears a delightful, affecting, picture, of filial duty, and paternal affection, mutually correſponding. What do you think of it, ſinners, who view with dread the ſacred miniſter ſeated in the tribunal of penance? You are affrighted by your own imaginary notions of his ſeverity, and rigor! You carry about with you a load of ſin upon your conſcience, which imbitters your life, ſooner than to ſeek, through his miniſtry, for a reconciliation with heaven; and an eaſe to your own wearied conſcience. Conſider, ſinner, that the father of the prodigal ſon, is the model for the miniſter

ſter of the altar to imitate, in receiving you to mercy, and pardon. He acts as the repreſentative of that father, full of mercy; and therefore ſhould not excite fear and terror in you, but is entitled to your confidence, as your inſtructor, and compaſſionate friend. He expreſſes the words of his model, in ſaying, " Oh all ye who groan under the weight of " your iniquities, come and I will diſcharge " you of your burthen." Thoſe tribunals for repentance — thoſe confeſſionals, which you ſee before you, were not ſo much intended for the juſt; as for the eaſe of mind, and conſolation, of repenting ſinners. The inviſible Prototype, Jeſus Chriſt, is there preſent.—He will not reject your tears.—He is the good Samaritan, who will pour balſam into your wounds.—He will cure them, and pardon you. Oh my dear Brethren! a ſinner is not long proſtrate, as a penitent, at the feet of Jeſus Chriſt, before he is received into his arms, as a boſom friend!

How ardently could I wiſh to imprint this idea of mercy, on the heart of that youth, who was unfortunately miſled into the paths of vice, and ſtrayed into that far country, mentioned in the parable! How I wiſh to tell him

him in the emphatic language of the parable, riſe, and return to your father—Baniſh all fear, and terror, from your mind.—Your return will be crowned with conſolation, and joy. How exquiſitely delightful are the firſt feelings of a ſinner, after his return to God! It is like the return of a man, to his native home, after a long abſence in a diſtant, and dangerous land! What a cordial to a wounded ſpirit, to paſs from the agitations of a guilty conſcience—from the galling ſlavery of ſome vile paſſion, which impriſons, and darkens, the mind, to a calm unburthened conſcience, to liberty, light, and immortality—at peace with God, and with himſelf!

Here let us pauſe for a moment, and admire the myſterious ways of God's mercy. Sometimes it ſeems inexplicably ſevere to pious ſouls, who always perſevered in the moſt exemplary paths of religion. Yet it ſeems to refuſe to them every interior comfort in their devotions, and to ſtrew their ways, with thorns, and diſquietudes. In proportion as they aim at chriſtian perfection—all ſpiritual, heavenly, comforts, are ſhut out from their minds—their innocence is terrified, with a thouſand unaccountable ſcruples, and remorſe

remorſe — terror, and deſpondency, accompany even their acts of piety.—Inwardly they feel, diſguſts, perplexity, and horror—and outwardly, they meet with temptations, enemies, and vexatious attacks. What a combination againſt thy favorite ſervants, Oh God! Art thou reſolved that they ſhould ſink under the tempeſt? No, Chriſtians! It is his mercy that permits thoſe fiery trials, to purify that gold, which is to adorn his own throne, for all eternity. When his all-wiſe deſigns are accompliſhed, their faith, their conſtancy, and perſeverance, will be rewarded a hundred fold.

But his mercy is more indulgent to newly converted ſinners. They are as yet too weak to bear thoſe trials. Their long contracted habits of ſin, have left behind a ſpiritual debility of mind, and heart; and a temptation, which could not endanger thoſe who long lived in the practice of piety, and virtue; would prove a fatal rock to the newly converted ſinner, upon which all his penitence, and tears—all his reſolutions of leading a better life in future, would be miſerably ſhipwrecked.

What further can I add, my Brethren, upon this important ſubject? If your hearts be not touched with the bare recital of the parable, my endeavors are uſeleſs. In vain do I ſpeak to you, if your own hearts have not already ſpoken to you. If they be ſilent, my words are uſeleſs. Let the parable totally diſappear. Let us come to realities, and make that application to your own conſcience, which is evidently intended by the goſpel-ſinner.—You are the prodigal ſon—The father—is the Father of mercy, who is in heaven.—He will be ever ready to receive you, to mercy, and pardon. He will even anticipate your return, and meet you on the way, by his inſpiring grace.—But delay not too long your return.—Though there be "a time in which God re-"members the ſinner."—There is another time, ay and a terrible time, in which he forgets him. Though his mercy be infinite, yet he himſelf fixes limits to the exerciſe of it; and next to a deſpair of his mercy, the greateſt crime, is to ſin in hopes of pardon. If you delay much longer, perhaps your father will not meet you on the way. His houſe may be for ever ſhut againſt you. If you knock at the door at an unſeaſonable hour; he

he has already anſwered you, in his goſpel—Depart—I know thee not!—Haſten, therefore, whilſt the door is ſtill open, and that the master of the family invites you, accept his invitation, and you will derive from it, many bleſſings of mind even in this life; and uninterrupted joy, and bleſſings, for all eternity.—*Amen.*

A SHORT ACCOUNT

OF THE

PUBLIC PRAYERS in the SPANISH CHAPEL for his HOLINESS POPE PIUS VI. on the 14th of MAY, 1798.

THE HIGH MASS began at Eleven o'clock. The R. Rev. Dr. HUSSEY officiated at the Altar. The Muſic, which was compoſed by Mr. DANBY—was ſolemn and impreſſive, and well executed by the CHOIR.

During the Service, Dr. HUSSEY read to the Congregation, the beginning of the 12th Chapter of the Acts of the Apoſtles down to the 13th verſe, and then ſpoke as follows.

IN the chapter of ſacred ſcripture which I have now read to you, the inſpired penman records the firſt perſecutions formed againſt the Church of Chriſt. The martyrdom of St. Stephen and of James the brother of John,

ſerved as an introduction to this miraculous delivery of St. Peter out of priſon.

You well know from eccleſiaſtical hiſtory that perſecution and bloodſhed purſued the footſteps of the early chriſtians, to which they only oppoſed ſignal miracles, and a patience and heroic courage; almoſt equal to the greateſt miracles. Their creed, and not their property, was *then* the object of perſecution.

For, the wiſdom of God did not think it proper, that the early ages of chriſtianity, ſhould be marked by any of its members, poſſeſſing extenſive power, or property. As the religion which he eſtabliſhed was a divine one, ſo he was determined that the world ſhould have no ſhare, or influence in the eſtabliſhment of it. Thus, when he ſent his only Son into the world, this divine Spirit was incarnate in a low and humble condition of life, and the apoſtles of his miniſtry, were choſen by him, from among the ſame claſs. Had the Son of God, when he deſcended upon earth, taken poſſeſſion of a brilliant throne, or extenſive empire. Had he ſelected his

apoſtles

apoſtles from among kings and princes, how ſoon would the unbeliever attribute the propagation of our holy religion, to the influence of worldly power; and claſs it with human errors, which are the mere contrivance of artful, and potent men. But the divine means which he made uſe of, to bring about this wonderful event, were ſuch as prove that nothing ſhort of an omnipotent hand, could produce ſuch effects from ſo diſproportioned a cauſe.

The ſame wiſdom for the ſpace of 300 years, ſupported his Church in a ſtate of poverty, and perſecution; and did not permit the agregation of property to her, until the miracles which had born teſtimony to her doctrine, became leſs frequent; and when perhaps, it became neceſſary, by worldly dignity, and ſplendor in the Church, to attract the notice and awe, if not the reſpect, of the unphiloſophic multitude; who are too much diſpoſed to treat with indifference, and contempt, the pureſt virtue, and the ſoundeſt truth, if cloathed in mean attire, like to their own. My intention is not to enquire whether the uſe, or the abuſe, of worldly riches,

in the Church, proved detrimental, or otherwiſe. I only wiſh to inculcate this truth, which is unqueſtionable, *that neither riches, nor ſplendor, nor worldly power of any kind, are eſſential to the exiſtence of the Church.*

What were the conſequences, and effect, of the Church poſſeſſing riches and ſplendor, cannot be an uſeful, nor perhaps an edifying ſubject to ſpeak upon, to a congregation aſſembled here for the purpoſe of offering prayers, and ſupplications, to the throne of God, to implore his benediction upon the ſupreme Paſtor of his Church, and thereby to imitate the firſt Chriſtians, of whom it is recorded in the epiſtle of this day, that whilſt Peter was in priſon, " prayers were made " without ceaſing, by the Church, to God, " for him."

Beſides the ſpiritual benefits accruing to each member of the Church, who offers up ſuch prayers, the perſonal character of the Sovereign Pontiff *, having invariably excited our

* The anſwer of Pope Pius the VIth to the French General, when he offered to him a National Cockade, and a Penſion.

" I acknow-

our admiration of his virtues, has conciliated our affection, and attachment, for him; and renders theſe prayers as much an act of inclination, as they are of duty. For, even in theſe dreadful and uncertain times, when the whole earth is in a ſtate of tremulous motion, and leaves whole nations, as well as individuals, uncertain of their fate, and not a ſpot to be found, where one can ſtand with certain ſecurity—when an infectious breath has iſſued from a Pandemonium, which, unfortunately for the world, is not merely a poetical or fictitious one; a breath more peſtilential and deſtructive, than any which ſweeps over the African deſert; yet in theſe dreadful and difficult times, he has united, and maintained,

" I acknowledge no uniform for me, except that with
" which the Church decorates me. You have power
" over my body, but my ſoul is beyond your reach. I
" want no penſion. My Crozier for a walking ſtaff, and
" a light covering is enough for one who is ſoon to ex-
" pire in ſackcloth, and aſhes. I adore the hand of the
" Moſt High, who puniſhes the ſhepherd, and the flock,
" for the ſins of the whole ſheepfold. It is in your
" power to burn and deſtroy the habitations of the liv-
" ing, and the monuments of the dead; but as for our
" Holy Religion, it will be after us, as it has been be-
" fore us, and will continue to the end of time."

in

in his own perſon, two characters, difficult to be found united even in the halcyon days, of general peace, and virtue. He has united, and ſupported, the magnanimity, the juſtice, and the courage, of a Sovereign, with the humility, zeal, and piety, of a Catholic Biſhop, the ſpiritual father of the whole Church. The admirable traits in his character are too many, and too well known, to make it neceſſary to relate them from the ſacred altar, in order to call for your admiration, and reſpect. There is one, however, which cannot be omitted, as it ſo peculiarly relates to this country, and bears a ſimilarity, in the means now employed, of applying for relief to heaven, when all other means had proved ineffectual.

I allude to the time which, you ſtill remember, (and remember with ſentiments of gratitude to heaven, for the removal of the misfortune) when the hand of God permitted our beloved Sovereign to be afflicted with a ſevere malady. When the ſupplications to God poured out for his recovery in every part of this iſland, and that the lamentations of his people had penetrated as far as the city of Rome; though all public communication

nication with this country had been interrupted for two hundred years—though Rome was the only part of the world, to which even the Sovereign was reſtricted by law from ſending a public meſſage, or meſſenger, yet the Supreme Paſtor, well knowing that no political difference, nor even a difference of religion, and creed, can break the gentle, yet adamantine chain of charity, ordered as fervent ſupplications to be offered up in that city for his Majeſty's recovery, as could be diſplayed in the cathedral of his own metropolis *: and Rome ſaw with aſtoniſhment and joy, her altars ſurrounded by pious votaries for the recovery of a King, between whom and them, an impolitic wall of ſeparation, had been raiſed for ſome centuries paſt: a reciprocal return, even from thoſe who are not profeſſedly his ſpiritual children, cannot but be ſeemly and meritorious.

As for the preſent attack upon the Church, it is not as dangerous, as many of the trials,

* The ſingular honors which Pius the VIth ſhewed to the perſons of the Royal Family of Great Britain who viſited Rome; his great attention to all Britiſh ſubjects, and eſpecially to the Britiſh regiment lately there, ſhews his high conſideration for this country.

and

and perſecutions ſhe underwent during the ſpace of ſeventeen hundred years. It is not ſo much a *direct* attack upon her creed and doctrine, as upon her property and worldly poſſeſſions. The blow is not aimed *directly* at her vitals, but at her ſplendid garments; which oftentimes hide from the view, the beauty of her faith—her ſublime principles and maxims, and the enchanting purity of her code of morals, which when dragged into view, even by the ill-intentioned hand of an enemy, captivate the very perſecutor, and enemy himſelf, and make him kneel down to adore, what the moment before his barbariſing hand was lifted to deface, and deſtroy for ever.

Fear not, my brethren, that he who founded his Church, and promiſed, "that "the gates of hell ſhould never prevail a-"gainſt her; and that he himſelf would re-"main with her to the end of the world," will be unfaithful to his promiſe. He will not permit any *eſſential* evil to befall her. He will ſupport her undefiled, and unappalled, in the midſt of the moſt ſtormy concuſſions, and exploſions of mighty empires; amidſt

amidſt the craſh, and ſlaughter, of a bleeding world.

The fatal revolutions of kingdoms and empires—the melancholy changes occaſioned by them, may affect the temporal welfare of many of her children, and may tempt ſome of the weak, and ignorant among them, to forſake her faith; whilſt the Church herſelf, with the code of her creed, and doctrine, remains unſhaken, like a towering rock, in the midſt of a boiſterous ocean, whoſe foaming waves, and billows, ſerve only to cleanſe and whiten it. Though ſo great a portion of her clergy, be caſt out wanderers over the face of the earth—though her venerable viſible head, be diſpoiled of his tempotal authority, and like a houſeleſs vagrant hath not where to repoſe his head—was not this the caſe of his predeceſſors for the greater part of the firſt three hundred years of the Church? Was not this the very caſe of his divine Maſter, as he himſelf expreſſes it? An enlightened Catholic, ſees therefore nothing new in the exiſting circumſtances; and feels himſelf ſecure in the promiſes of Chriſt, that he will not abandon his Church, until he ſees her

ſafe through all the dangers of time, and landed in eternity. The power and riches, and authority, of this paſſing world, are by nature periſhable, and muſt periſh; whilſt the ſpiritual powers of the Church, (and Jeſus Chriſt never conferred any other but a ſpiritual power on her) like every thing elſe that is ſpiritual, cannot periſh, but muſt ſurvive the extinction of the ſun, and ſtars.

Let us, therefore, continue our humble ſupplications to the Father of mercy, to implore his bleſſing upon the Church of Chriſt, with full confidence in his divine and infallible promiſe, that he will protect her to the laſt; and as to the leſſer evils with which the world may afflict her, let us beſeech him that he will graciouſly pleaſe to turn aſide thoſe trials which might prove too dangerous to any of her children; and conclude our prayers, with the reſignation, of which Jeſus Chriſt is the teacher, and the model——

"THY WILL BE DONE."